(SHRI SHIVRAJ PATIL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) It would not be in the public interest to disclose either details of the terms and conditions of the Agreement or the likely foreign exchange outgo under the contract.

Decision on Jaswant Singh Commission Report

2040. SHRI M. KADHARSHA: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any decision on Jaswant Singh Commission report about setting up of High Court Benches;

(b) if not, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) if the answer to part (a) above be in the affirmative, by when the Government are going to implement the report?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H. R. BHARDWAJ): (a) to (c) The specific recommendations made by the Jaswant Singh Commission regarding the establishment of Benches of the High Courts of Allahabad, Madhya Pradesh and Madras were referred to the Government of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu respectively for their viwes/comments in consultation with the concerned High Courts. Their replies giving definite proposals and complete views have not yet been received.

FMS Project

2041. SHRI KAPIL VERMA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state·

(a) what have been the achievements of the Flexible Manufacturing Systems Projects (FMS) so far;

(b) what is the nature of equipments which have been installed and those which are proposed to be installed; and

(c) what would be its role in the development of software for the FMS activity?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT, ATOMIC ENERGY, ELECTRONICS, AND SPACE (SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN): (a) A centre is being established for building up a FMS laboratory with full complements of hardware for manufacture. This centre is expected to start soon. Further to become self-sufficient in the 'Sensor' technology which is one of the basic pre-requisites for FMS a project for the "Development of Sensors" with an outlay of Rs. 90 lakhs over a period of 3 years has been approved. Central Scientific Instruments. Organisation (CSIO), Chandigarh has been allocated this project. Work on this has already begun.

(b) The equipment which have been identified for procurement are as follows:—

1. 6 axis industrial robot : pick and place.

2 CCD Video communication camera—automation series.

3. Vision interface processor.

4. Ultrasonic imaging system.

5. Tek workstations.

6. Laser sensors and testing equipment.

7. Opto-vision system with decision processor Solid state camera.

8. Tek digital analysis system.

9 Digital processing module with gripper.

Negotiations for the finalisation of orders are in progress.

(c) Manufacturing unit having FMS as its functional configuration needs different types of sensors (such as tactile, electromagnetic, ultrasonic, pressure force, fibre optic etc.) to control its different operations. Consequently, software will be developed to link the sensor detecting systems to the manufacturing cells, inspection cells, assembly cells, inventory units etc.

Request by Afghanistan to join SAARC

2042. SHRI B SATYANARAYAN REDDY:

SHRI KAPIL VERMA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Afghanistan is willing to join the SAARC countries;

(b) if so, whether any request has been received from Afghanistan; and

(c) if so, the action taken by the SAARC at Kathmandu summit thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH) (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) There being no specific provision for the admission of new members to the Association, it was decided that the Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries would examine the question.

Entitlement to travel by AC 1st Class

2043. SHRI RAFIQUE ALAM: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Central Government employees, drawing pay equal to the defence officers of the rank of Majors and Lt. Colonels, are entitled to travel in AC 1st Class, while the defence officers of these ranks are entitled to travel only in 2 tier AC;

(b) if so, what are the reasons for such disparity; and

(c) whether Government propose to allow defence officers of the rank of Major and Lt. Colonel also to travel in 1st Class AC; if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE PRODUCTION AND SUPPLIES IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHIVRAJ PATIL): (a) to (c) In the case of civilian officers, the entitlement to travel by air conditioned First Class in the Railways is based on pay. Civilian officers drawing pay in excess of Rs. 5100/- per month are entitled to such travel.

On the other hand, Defence Service officers derive a similar entitlement from the rank held. Thus, officers of the rank of Colonel and above are eligible to travel by air conditioned First Class while officers of the rank of Lt. Col and Major are entitled to travel by air conditioned Second Class.

Because Service officers are in receipt of an integrated scale, it is possible for lower ranking officers to draw pays in excess of higher ranking officers. To base the entitlement to travel by First Class air conditioned on pays in respect of Services officers would lead to the anomaly that on many occasions individual lower ranking officers may be entitled to travel by this Class whilst their superiors travel in a lower Class. As this would be inconsistent with the sanctity of rank structure on which the Defence Services are based, there is no proposal to modfy the current policy.